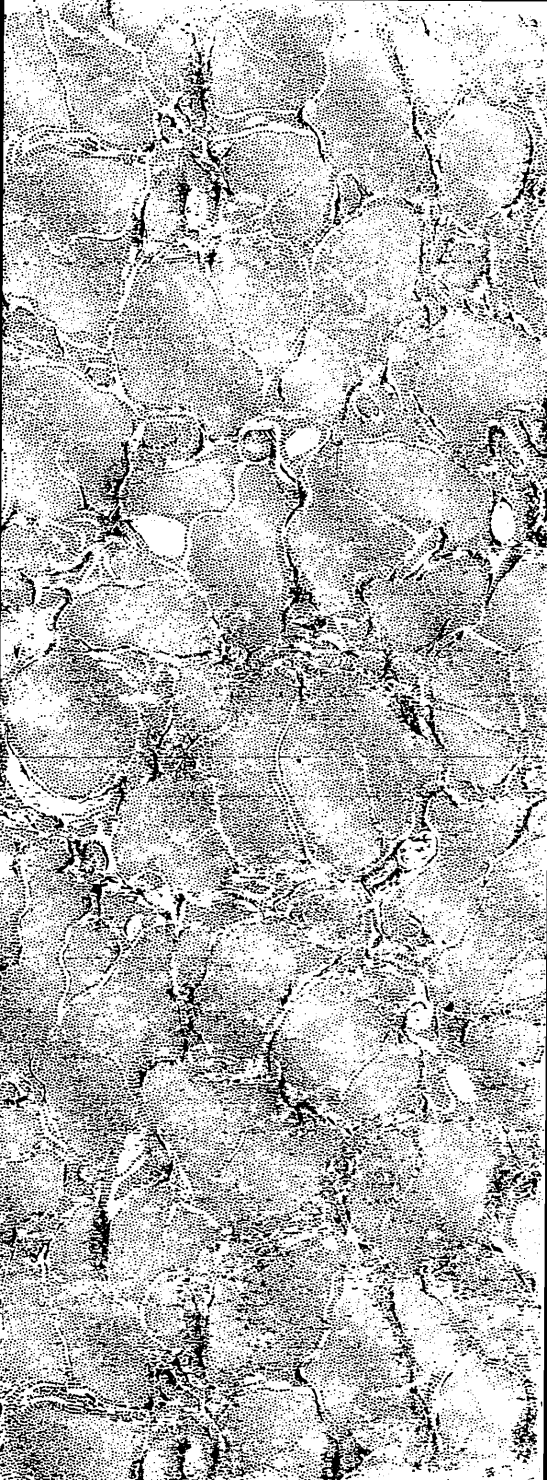


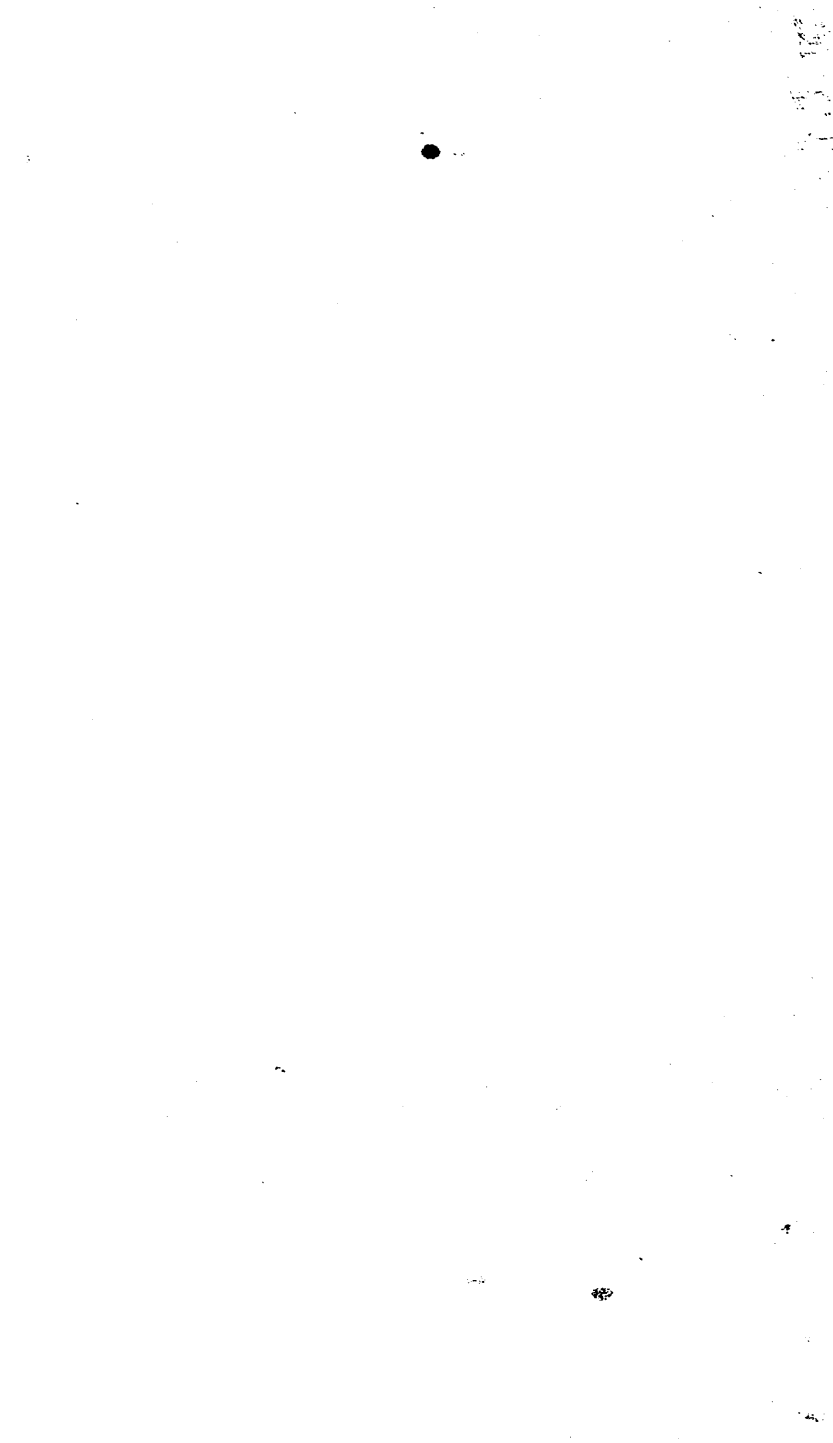
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THE HIDDEN MYSTERY

Studies on the Epistle to the Ephesians

by

W. M. F. SCOTT, M.A.

Chaplain of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford



LUTTERWORTH PRESS
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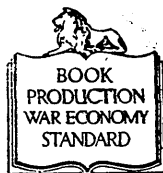
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PREFACE

THESE six chapters reproduce a series of Bible readings given at a Youth Summer School of the Church Missionary Society in August 1941. The talks were given from notes and were not taken down at the time, as the suggestion of publication was not made until afterwards. They are not, therefore, exactly reproduced. But I have tried to keep as near as possible to the spoken form, except for the addition of a few paragraphs at various points which seemed to need clarification or emphasis. The prayer overleaf was used each day when these Bible readings were given, and is printed here by request.

I can hardly hope that anything I have written is original, and obligations are too numerous to mention. But I would like to record my special thanks to Canon D. E. W. Harrison for many valuable suggestions; to the Rev. G. J. Rogers of the C.M.S. by whose initiative these Bible readings came to be published; and to the Rev. A. J. Lee for his practical help in preparing the MS for publication.

*Wycliffe College,
Oxford
May, 1942*

W. M. F. S.

A PRAYER

O JESU, master-carpenter of Nazareth, who on the cross, through wood and nails hast wrought man's full salvation, wield well thy tools in this thy workshop, that we who come to thee rough-hewn may be fashioned to a truer beauty by thy hand; who with the Father and the Holy Ghost livest and reignest, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

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CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND

THE Church to which St. Paul wrote had not only spread geographically from Jerusalem to Asia Minor, but also racially so as to include both Jews and Gentiles. This achievement had not been reached without difficulty. For the supporters of foreign missions had even greater objections to meet in the early Church than to-day. People not only said, as they say to us, that there are quite enough needs at home to tackle first; they also said that it was wrong to admit Gentiles into the Church at all—they were regarded as outside God's interest unless they became Jews first.

The Church after Pentecost "continued stedfastly with one accord in the temple" (Acts ii. 46). It appeared to be nothing more than a sect within Judaism, distinguished by the belief that the Messiah had already come. The stages by which it moved away from this position were only very gradual. When Stephen's death was followed by persecution, the members of the Jerusalem Church were "all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles" (viii. 1), who no doubt thought it far more important to look after the work in Jerusalem than to spread the Gospel. But the Gospel did spread, in spite of the apostles, for the first time beyond Judaism to the Samaritans. These were a kind of third cousins to the Jews and claimed to be true Israëlites, but the Jews would not admit their claim. The apostles, however, in the name of the whole Church received these Samaritan converts into the Church by the laying on of hands with prayer. The door had been opened a crack, and—fresh from his experience at Samaria—Philip gave baptism to the Ethiopian eunuch who was

returning from Jerusalem and in touch with Judaism, but not a Jew.

A similar action on the part of St. Peter caused some stir. He received into the Church by baptism "Cornelius, a righteous man and one that feareth God" (x. 22), a phrase which, in the Acts, means a Gentile who was on the fringe of the Synagogue and attended its worship, but had not become a full member by accepting circumcision. Serious objections were raised at Jerusalem, but St. Peter could claim that God had ratified this step by sending the Holy Ghost upon Cornelius, and eventually the Church at Jerusalem gave its approval (xi. 1-18).

An even greater step is recorded in xi. 19: "They therefore that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to none save only to Jews." They were carrying out the old Jerusalem tradition. "But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who when they were come to Antioch, spake *unto the Greeks also*, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them" (xi. 20-21). It was probably anxiety about this step which made the Jerusalem Church send Barnabas down to Antioch (xi. 22). And when Barnabas arrived there he remembered the very man to help him deal with the situation—Saul of Tarsus, who now joined him. In the fellowship of these Gentile Church converts Paul lived for over a year (xi. 25-26) and with their prayers and blessing he set out on his missionary travels (xiii. 1-3).

Antioch had been decisive. It had shown the Church that it had to decide between a message of a Jewish Messiah for Jewish people—or of the Saviour of the world. St. Paul was in no doubt and he went through Asia Minor, and then on into Europe itself, preaching the Gospel everywhere, to the Jew first and *also to the Gentile*. But the controversy went on. In spite of the efforts of the council of Jerusalem (xv)

to settle the question, St. Paul still found his steps dogged by the Judaizing party, who wanted his converts to submit to the Jewish law. His view, of course, won the day, but not without violent conflict which we can see reflected in his epistles, especially Romans and Galatians.

At the time when he wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians St. Paul was in Rome; perhaps in prison, perhaps merely under house arrest in his own house. For 15 years or more he had been overwhelmed with work—preaching the Gospel; undertaking the care of all the Churches; facing his opponents. But now, for a change, he could sit down in peace and reflect. He could see *what God had done*, how He had called into being a Church over a wide area in which Jew and Gentile were one in Christ. The deepest division he knew had been overcome. He could also see *what God meant by it*. The existence of the Church was part of His eternal purpose, of the outworking of the mystery, long-hidden from human understanding, but now revealed in Christ (Eph. iii. 5). With these thoughts in mind he wrote a letter.

It was probably a circular letter to the Churches of Asia Minor, leaving a blank after "to the saints at . . ." (i. 1), to be filled in with the name of the appropriate church, Ephesus, Laodicea, etc. It happened that the one which went to Ephesus was preserved and copied. So St. Paul did not have to concentrate on any particular controversy or crisis, or particular circumstances of a local church. He was able to tell them what God had been showing him as he had prayed and thought—to put down in black and white the great thoughts that had gradually matured in his mind during his hectic years of missionary work.

Oswald Chambers once said: "To think is an effort, to think rightly is a great effort, and to think as a Christian ought to think is the greatest effort of a human soul." It is that effort which we must make if we are to grasp the mes-

sage which God gave St. Paul, and wants to give us through this epistle. Our study will not cover every phrase and sentence; we shall even have to leave out large sections. But it will be our aim to see the epistle and its message as a whole and to gain a fuller understanding of God's purpose for the world. For this is "the mystery which from all ages had been hid in God who created all things" (iii. 9) and has now been made known in Christ.¹

¹ We shall use the Revised Version throughout.

CHAPTER II

THE DIVINE PLAN AND THE DIVINE MEDIUM

Ephesians i. 1-14

THE SALUTATION [i. 1-2]

THIS tells us to whom St. Paul is writing: "To the saints . . . the faithful in Christ Jesus." The word "saint" means holy, not in the sense of someone extremely righteous, but merely in the sense of being consecrated, set apart. The word was very frequently used to mean "Israel" or an "Israelite", because Israel was set apart or consecrated as God's chosen people. So, when St. Paul addresses his letter "to the saints", he is saying that it is written to the chosen people. This introduces us at once to the unspoken principle of the New Testament, that God's saving action always works through a chosen people. First He worked through Israel, and then when the old Israel, God's vine (Ps. lxxx. 8; Jer. ii. 21), failed, there came the true Vine, who was in Himself all that Israel was meant to be. In Him God made a new Israel—the Church—by making men branches of the true Vine, members of Christ's Body, through which He now works in the world. Therefore St. Paul goes on to describe whom he means by the chosen people—not those who are members of a nation by birth, but those who are members of Christ Jesus, of the Body of Christ, by faith: "To the saints . . . the faithful in Christ Jesus."

THE THANKSGIVING [i. 3-14]

With that thought in mind, St. Paul begins his letter. It was good manners in those days to begin a letter with a

thanksgiving, usually a mere formality. So St. Paul starts by giving thanks for the blessings of the chosen people, the new Israel, the Church, the faithful in Christ Jesus: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." But that was a thought which could never be a mere formality with St. Paul, and so he is swept away into a great hymn of praise. He is almost overwhelmed with the greatness of God's loving purpose as he considers the Church and its blessings. Thought after thought presses into his mind, jostling in, one on top of another. There was no time to sort them out, set them down in logical order, hardly to express them grammatically.

How did this chosen people ever come into existence? His mind is carried back into eternity, before time was. It was because God's eternal purpose planned it in Christ before the foundation of the world, because God's eternal purpose came to earth and Christ died that He might bring us to God. What is the meaning of the existence of this chosen people? They exist because it is God's eternal purpose "to sum up all things in Christ". That eternal purpose was at work before time began and it will have its consummation when time is ended. But more than that, it is at work now and, if we want the evidence, He points us to the Holy Spirit already at work in the lives of Christians.

So in these verses we find intertwined three thoughts:

1. God's purpose proceeding from His choice in the past.
2. God's purpose leading to a future consummation.
3. God's purpose manifested in His present activity.

These thoughts cannot be sharply distinguished. They interlock—each is part of the others.

We also find three recurring phrases which will help to give us the clue to St. Paul's thinking:

1. His will. *Vv.* 5, 9, 11.
2. In Christ, in Him, in Whom, etc. *Vv.* 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10 (twice), 11, 12, 13 (twice)—eleven times in all.
3. To the praise of His glory. *Vv.* 6, 12, 14.

A glance at the contexts in which these phrases occur will show that St. Paul connects each of them with each of the three thoughts we have already noticed. So, in working out St. Paul's meaning in these verses, we can put the two together and sum up under these three heads:

- (1) We were chosen in Christ according to the good pleasure of God's will that we might be to the praise of His glory.
- (2) All things are to be summed up in Christ according to the will of God to the praise of His glory.
- (3) In Christ we now have the Holy Spirit by the will of God that we might be to the praise of His glory.

God's will, God's glory; that is all that matters, and Christ is the only key to them both. We can now go into each of these thoughts in greater detail.

1. *God's purpose—its basis from all eternity.* "He chose us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love: having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (i. 4-5).

We will not discuss the question of predestination for the simple reason that St. Paul is not discussing it here. He is not telling us why certain individuals are Christians, members of the chosen people, and others are not—but why there is a chosen people at all. The former idea of individual predestination, though raising tremendous problems, is quite

another question, and St. Paul has neither asked nor answered it here. He is saying that the existence of the Church is not an accidental matter; it depends on the purpose of God. More than that, it was in Christ that God chose us before the foundation of the world. Christ was no mere creature of time, of no more importance for our understanding of the world than Confucius, Socrates or Mohammed. Christ had existed from all eternity; and from all eternity God had been Christ-like. The purposes of Christ were from all eternity the purposes of God. So the existence of a universal Church of Christ is not the mere fad of a few missionary enthusiasts, or the passing expression of racial superiority, a kind of spiritual imperialism. It is rooted and grounded in the purposes of God.

He chose us that we should be "to the praise of the glory of his grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved". Grace means free, undeserved favour, and by stressing God's undeserved and free choice of us St. Paul is emphasizing that the Christian is not a self-made man. He knows that he depends utterly upon God for salvation. We are indeed doubly dependent. First, we are saved only because God planned our salvation in Christ before the world began. Secondly, the salvation which God planned before eternity is ours to-day—not because we earned it, or because we were fit for it, but because while we were yet sinners and deserved nothing, Christ died for us, and so redeemed us with His blood, i.e. His life offered in sacrifice. We cannot say, "We are Christians; that shows what excellent people we are". We can only say, "We are Christians: that shows the amazing depths of God's undeserved love and forgiveness". Therefore our salvation is "to the praise of the glory of his grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved [i.e. in Christ, His beloved Son] in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins according to the riches of his grace" (i. 6-7).

2. *God's purpose—its destined consummation.* This St. Paul describes in two phrases, in i. 10: "to sum up all things in Christ"; and in i. 14: "the redemption of God's own possession unto the praise of his glory."

The world belongs to God because He created it, and because it has been bought with a price. Because it belongs to Him, He is going to redeem it. Here St. Paul uses "redeem" not in its usual sense of paying the price, but in the sense of claiming full ownership of that for which the price has already been paid. St. Paul was not blind to the facts of evil, but he would not have agreed with someone who said to me recently, "I think the world has got too bad for God, and He has just washed His hands of it". There is, however, a point behind this which must be answered. The world is full of evil and wars, sin and suffering and slums, lust and lying and cruelty and cancer; how can such a world really belong to God? Only because He is going "to sum up all things in Christ".

St. Paul's phrase "to sum up" is not easy to express by any one English word. But it is the key word for our understanding of the epistle. It means something like "to arrange in an ordered whole so as to give point to", "to bring unto a coherent unity", or, in a word, "to integrate". St. Paul says in Rom. xiii. 9, that the command to love sums up all the rest. The point of all law is to make opportunities of love. The command to love brings all other commandments into the unity of a single principle. The word was most commonly used to describe the concluding peroration of a speech, which should draw all the previous points together and bring them to a head, so that paragraphs which had previously seemed to have been disconnected are now seen to contribute to a unified whole. Similarly, we find another writer, about 15 years later than St. Paul, saying, "A city sums up the houses". You may not be able to see why this or that house is placed where it is, but if it is a well-planned city you would have your question answered

if you went up in an aeroplane and could see the individual house in relation to the whole city. The city gives point to the individual house, because it is an ordered whole. That is exactly what the Cross does. The jealousy, selfishness and cowardice of men were turned upon Christ, and He turned them into an instrument of salvation for the world. Again, when a man accepts Christ and lives in union with Him, God uses his sin and weakness as the raw material of His design. He sums it up—gives it a new point in Christ. As the Judge put it in Dorothy Sayers's play *The Devil to Pay*—

Adam sinned, indeed,
And with him all mankind; and from that sin
God wrought a nobler virtue out for Adam
And with him, all mankind . . .
There is no waste with God; He cancels nothing
But redeems all.

“He cancels nothing, but redeems all.” That is very true. A sinner comes to be in Christ and his sin is forgiven, but it is still a fact. Yet the meaning of the fact is changed, for instead of being a useless mess it redounds to the glory of God. The forgiveness of that sin now shows the greatness of God's love, and the power that God gives to overcome this sin enables the Christian to witness with a strength and conviction which he would not otherwise have had. Similarly, the suffering of a Christian when it is transformed by Christ is no longer a pointless waste; it becomes a wonderful testimony to God's love and strength. Every parson has the opportunity to prove this from time to time in his visiting. He comes away from a sick bed or a bereaved home with an overwhelming sense of the goodness and love of God because he has seen in Christian suffering a radiance found nowhere else. The suffering is being summed up in Christ. He it is who transforms it, so that it has a point.

But what we see of this process in Christian experience is only an infinitesimal part of what is to be done. God “is at

work to sum up all things" in Christ—to bring all things under His Cross, so that instead of being blots in His world, they shall have a place in God's plan, because they have been brought into relation with Christ and His Cross. All things are to be summed up: East and West; black and white. Christianity is not something suitable only for Englishmen or Western civilization; in Christ God is working out a purpose that is universal.

3. *God's purpose—its present operation.* Just as we understand the individual house in the light of the city which sums it up, so also we must understand what we know of the present operation of God's purpose in the light of its final end—the summing up of all things in Christ. Unless our Christian experience transforms evil by the power of Christ and so shows itself in fact to be part of that universal process, it is not the real thing. In working out that process through us, God gives us three things:

First, *a break with the past*: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (i. 13).

The blessings are received "in the heavenly places", i.e. not in the future life but as we live in the spiritual world here and now. Moreover, they are received "in Christ": reception depends on a personal relationship with Him. Christianity, therefore, is not something which applies to all nice-minded people, or even to all those who have a friendly attitude towards the Church or towards Our Lord. There is a before and after, a line to be crossed. Almost every word which St. Paul uses to explain God's present activity in the lives of Christians stresses this. Look at them:

- | | | |
|-------------|---------|---|
| Adoption | (i. 5). | One day nothing; the next day a son. |
| Redemption | (i. 7). | One day slaves; the next day free. |
| Forgiveness | (i. 7). | One day guilty; the next moment forgiven. |

Grace

(i. 7). One moment deserve nothing, have nothing; the next moment still deserve nothing but have God's best gift.

"We were made a heritage" (i. 11). The activity is God's, not ours. This new relationship with God in Christ is not something into which a man grows up naturally (though he may come into it gradually), or even something he gets by deciding to turn over a new leaf. It comes as we ask God to do for us what we cannot possibly do for ourselves.

Secondly, *A guarantee for the future*: "Ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance" (i. 13-14).

When I was staying in Jerusalem, I had an invitation to go and stay at Salt in Transjordan, so I went to negotiate with an Arab carrier for a seat in his car for the day on which I wished to go there. As I was leaving him, he shouted after me with great excitement: "*Arabun, arabun, arabun!*" But I was almost more excited; for I recognized the same word that St. Paul uses here for "the earnest" (*arrabon*), still in use in Palestine to-day. The Arab meant that I must pay down a deposit to show that I really meant business—to prevent my booking a place, and then failing to turn up to claim it on the day. So St. Paul means that God has given us the gift of the Holy Spirit as a guarantee that He means business and will finish the job.

Karl Barth, the Swiss theologian and prophet of our day who has been raised up to restore to the Church the sense of God's sovereignty, and whose theology has strengthened the Confessional Church in Germany to take its magnificent stand, has recently written "A letter to Great Britain from Switzerland". In this letter he expresses a thought very similar to that of St. Paul here: "The world in which we live is the place where Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and the

present age is the time of God's long suffering until the day when the same Jesus Christ shall come again in His glory. It is on the world in which we live, in all the transitoriness of its present existence, with the sins which we commit and the misery they bring, and with the shadow of death cast over it—it is on this world in its entirety that God has set His mark, in that He has exalted the name of Jesus above every name; 'that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth' (Phil. ii. 10). Since this is true, the world in which we live is not some sinister wilderness, where fate or chance holds sway, or where all sorts of 'principalities and powers' run riot unrestrained and rage about unchecked. Since this is true, the world has not been given up to the devil or to man that they may make of it some vast 'Insanity Fair' according to the whimsical impulses of some individual or collective spirits of mischief . . . It is indeed true that the whole creation groans with us, because, as the place where Jesus suffered and died, it has been made subject to vanity. But it is also true that this same creation is already consecrated through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ in expectation of his coming again and of 'a new heaven and a new earth'." ¹

In this world Jesus Christ rose from the dead; and in that resurrection we have God's *arrabon* to the world—His guarantee that He means business. He has put too much into the world to be willing ever to give it up to the powers of evil. He will finish the job. But St. Paul finds this certainty in the gift of the Holy Spirit rather than in the Resurrection. Christians are men to whom God has given the Holy Spirit; and that gift, says St. Paul, is God's *arrabon*, His earnest to the Christian, His first instalment and guarantee that He means business. He has committed Himself to us too far ever to be willing to draw back. He will finish the

¹ *A Letter to Great Britain from Switzerland*, pp. 9-10.

job. "He which began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ" (i. 6).

Thirdly, *God gives us an understanding of His purpose*. "In all wisdom and prudence having made known unto us the mystery of his will . . . unto a dispensation of the fulness of times, to sum up all things in Christ" (i. 9-10).

We know that God has a purpose—to sum up all things in Christ. We know that He can and will work that purpose out—that is the mystery of His will, once hidden, but now revealed to Christians. But why has God revealed this to us? Not to give us security, comfort and peace, while others go through hell; nor indeed to satisfy our curiosity. God has shown us this "unto a dispensation of the fulness of times", or, as we might paraphrase it, "unto a stewardship appropriate to the fulness of times". St. Paul's word for dispensation means a way of managing things by entrusting them to others. God's way of managing the achievement of one stage of His eternal purpose is to entrust it to us. This open secret of His purpose, "the mystery of His will", has been revealed to us because our work, our personal Christian witness, our business life as Christians in the world, the growth of the universal Church in the East and West are all part of God's working out of His great plan to sum up all things in Christ.

CHAPTER III

THE DIVINE POWER AND THE DIVINE LOVE

Ephesians i. 15-ii. 10

THE DIVINE POWER IS REVEALED IN CHRIST [i. 15-23]

ST. PAUL'S thanksgiving leads him to a prayer which he does not finish until iii. 21. He starts it in i. 15: "For this cause . . ." but after i. 19 his thoughts gradually lead him off into a long digression. In iii. 1 he makes another effort to start again: "For this cause . . ." But in the next verse his thoughts break in and lead him off again until, in iii. 14, he starts again: "For this cause . . ." and finally brings the prayer to a conclusion. It may be a consolation to realize that St. Paul's thoughts wandered in his prayers as ours do, though we should do well if our prayers were as good as his wandering thoughts. Turning to the part of the prayer which we have here we will consider it under three headings, which are all echoes of St. Paul's thought in the earlier part of this chapter (i. 3-14). He is praying that the blessings, with which God has blessed us in Christ, may become truly ours.

What he prays. He prays for three things: (1) "that ye may know what is the hope of his (God's) calling" (i. 18). It was God who called us and chose us before the world began. Therefore we are given a hope, by which the New Testament means not a desire tempered by uncertainty but a confident expectation. Many people have a vague and wistful longing for the triumph of goodness. The Christian has had in his own experience a taste and first instalment of this

triumph (i. 14). Moreover, the calling of the Christian was not a weak wish on man's part, but it was God's purpose from the very beginning, and so it looks forward with confident expectation "Faithful is he that calleth you who will also do it".

(2) He prays that they may know "what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (i. 18), the riches of God's inheritance in His people, the Church. In St. Paul's day, as in ours, the Church was not always much to look at. It had its weaknesses and failures. It seemed very insignificant. Its scandals as we find them reflected in St. Paul's epistles (e.g. I Corinthians) would have filled the cheaper picture papers with more than usually salacious material for at least a fortnight, had they occurred in the life of an English parish to-day. But what people saw of the Church in St. Paul's day, or what we see of it now, is only a tiny unfinished portion of the whole. It looks forward to the time when the work shall be complete, all things shall be summed up in Christ and He shall "present the church to himself, a glorious church, not having a spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (v. 27). Then shall the whole universe see what we now know by faith, "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints".

(3) "And what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe". He prays that they may know not only God's calling in the past and His inheritance in the future, but also God's power in the present, working in the individual believer and the corporate life of the Church. The Holy Spirit gives us, not only an earnest for the future, but also power in the present. Notice the same threefold look as in the opening thanksgiving towards the past, the future, and the present. The two former points he has developed in the thanksgiving. The mention here of power leads him to expand the thought in the rest of chapter one (i. 19-23).

Why he prays. Before we consider what St. Paul has to say about God's power, we must ask why he puts his remarks in the form of a prayer. It looks at first sight like a bit of pious formality. Why not say straight out "I think you ought to know" instead of using this round about way of telling them *via* God? But St. Paul was not a man for conventional pieties. He put his desire that they should know these things in the form of a prayer because of the way in which they come to be known. God gives us a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him (i. 17), and it is when we "have the eyes of our heart enlightened that we know" the hope of God's calling, the riches of His inheritance and the greatness of His power (i. 18-19). Bear in mind that by the word *know* the Bible usually means far more than bare intellectual awareness, it means an inward and active conviction. It says of Adam and Eve that "their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked" (Gen. iii. 7). This does not imply that previously they had imagined themselves clothed, but that now their state came home to them with an inward and active conviction. St. Paul wanted his readers to have an inward and active conviction, such as only God could give. Therefore he was driven to pray, and it is only when his prayer is answered that the work of the Church is ever done.

I once had a discussion with a Hungarian who firmly believed that since we are a commercial nation our only motive in sending out missionaries was a cunning business stratagem, to help our export trade by making the natives wear clothes which would be supplied to them from Manchester. But the work of the Church is not based on ideas of commercial advantage or, in the last resort, on rational planning or even on ideas of what is humanly likely or possible. The founders of the Church Missionary Society were Evangelicals; members of the most hated and despised section of the Church of England of their day. Several

Bishops had tried to stamp it out. One of them (Bishop Marsh of Peterborough) produced a "trap for Calvinists", consisting of eighty-seven questions to be answered by any clergyman before being licensed; the purpose of which was to exclude all Evangelicals from his diocese. Of the 13 clerical members of the foundation committee of the C.M.S. in 1799, only four were of sufficient importance to have a living. They had no influence in the councils of the Church. It is of course true that among their lay colleagues were some of the outstanding politicians and business men of the day, such as William Wilberforce and Henry Thornton. But where others saw merely openings for foreign trade, they saw openings for the Gospel, which no amount of ridicule or opposition could prevent them from taking. Their vision came to them through their knowledge of God. He had enlightened the eyes of their heart, and so they had an inward and active conviction of the hope of God's calling that was world-wide in its scope, of the riches of His inheritance in the saints, riches which would be incomplete without the contribution of every nation and of all tribes and peoples and tongues of the East as well as the West; a conviction, too, of God's power, which enabled them to face all difficulties, ridicule and opposition, and take in hand the impossible task of the evangelization of Africa and the East.

Lord Shaftesbury was serving on a lunacy commission when a dispute arose over the sanity of a certain lady. A doctor crept up to his chair and whispered confidentially, "Are you aware, my Lord, that she subscribes to the Society for the Conversion of the Jews?"—"Indeed!" replied Lord Shaftesbury, "and are you aware that I am President of that Society?" Such an enterprise seemed sheer madness to one who had not had the eyes of his heart opened. What a fool Hudson Taylor must have appeared when, with no backers, no missionaries and no prospects, he "prayed for twenty-four willing, skilful labourers" and the next day opened

the banking account of the China Inland Mission with £10. But he had "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him", the eyes of his heart were enlightened to see God's purpose in the light of God's power, with the result that during the last 75 years the C.I.M. has done more than any other single Protestant missionary society to bring the Gospel to China.

The chief object of his prayer. St. Paul's object is that we should know the power of God, "what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead" (i. 19-20). St. Paul uses every word he can press into service to express God's power, and even then he leaves us with the impression that he has not quite said all he wants to say. For faith rests upon the power of God. We can attempt great things for God only if we can expect great things from God. Why do we so often fail even to try to win our friends for Christ, to tackle difficult jobs for Him, or to set ourselves new standards of Christian living? Is it not often because, as we say, "we don't think it's any good"; in other words we have no effective belief in the power of God to enable when He commands. So St. Paul emphasizes that this power of God, of which we must get an inward and active conviction, is the same power which we have seen at work in Christ. He cannot say more than that. It is the power that raised Him from the dead, that exalted Him to God's right hand, set him over every power in the universe and gave Him to be head over all things to the Church, His Body (i. 19-23).

"Gave him to be head over all things to the Church" (i. 22). To modern ears what an anticlimax to mention the Church in the same breath with Christ's Resurrection and universal dominion! But in St. Paul's thought there was a vital connection. We shall see this if we remember that the Greek

word translated "to sum up" is derived from the word for "head" (*kephalē* = head, *anakephalaio* = sum up). The culmination of Christ's supremacy is His place in the Church as its head and chief corner-stone, who sums up, i.e. holds together in a harmonious whole and ordered unity, previously warring and discordant elements. Christ is everywhere supreme, and His supremacy is shown in a visible and unique manner in the Church, the instrument and sample of His work of summing up all things. He is now head over the Church in order that He may be finally and fully head over all existence. That is why the missionary task of the Church is an essential part of God's purpose. In this task the Church is Christ's fulness or fulfilment (i. 23). The head can do nothing without the instrumentality of the body: the body is necessary to fulfil the purposes of Christ, to make actual in the world all that has been achieved by the victory of the Cross and Resurrection.

Yes, but can this body do it? The members of an undergraduate religious society had spent a conference discussing how they were going to build the Kingdom of God, and were somewhat taken aback when their closing speaker, an older and wiser man, began "So, my young friends, you think that God needs all you young people to help him put the world right. Well, well, all I can say is, poor old God!" Can we who are the body really do this job? What an impossibility God has entrusted to us! But that is not all. The body is related to the head not only as its instrument, but as the sharer of its life. "He gave him to be head over all things to the church which is his body"—not His firm or His army but His Body, the sharer of His life. The Body is dead in itself: it lives by the life of the Head. The Body is weak in itself: it works by the power of the Head. The Body is lost by itself: it moves under the direction of the Head. He has given the Body a work to do, but it is not to be done alone. For He has come to be part of the Body, to be in it

as its life and Head. The power of the Resurrection is the power in the Church.

GOD'S LOVE SAVES MEN THROUGH CHRIST [ii. 1-10]

How is it that weak and sinful men like ourselves have any part in all that we have been discussing, in Christ and His Resurrection power, in the life and work of His Body? It is because God loved us, and "for his great love wherewith he loved us" (ii. 4), gave us new life. So we are brought to the individual and the way he comes to have a share in God's purpose.

Where does God find man? St. Paul answers this question in ii. 1. He finds us when we are "dead in trespasses and sins . . . by nature children of wrath". (The latter phrase does not refer primarily to original sin, but is a Hebraism meaning deserving of wrath.) We are spiritually dead, and can no more get spiritual life for ourselves than a corpse can lift itself out of its coffin. We need not deny the elements of goodness that we find in human nature. For man was created in the image of God, and sin has not totally obliterated that image. But there is nothing in man's nature, not even his goodness, which is free from the taint of sin. As Studdert Kennedy put it:

There's nothin' in man that's perfect,
And nothin' that's all complete,
'E's nubbat a big beginning
From 'is 'ead to the soles of 'is feet;
There's summat as draws im' uppards,
And summat as drags 'im dahn,
And the consekence is 'e wobbles
'Twixt muck and a golden crahn.

Man's sinful nature is a fact to be reckoned with: otherwise the most well-meaning schemes will fail. The Americans, for example, had a perfect scheme for abolishing drunkenness. They passed a law forbidding the manufacture or

import of alcoholic drinks. But there were too many people who still wanted their drinks, and meant to have them, law or no law, with the result that prohibition was a failure. It had failed to reckon with unregenerate human nature. There are people to-day who claim to have the blue-prints of a new heaven and a new earth to be realized after the war. Of course it is our duty to do the best we can to remedy injustices and to give careful thought to ways and means. But we must also remember that we can only go a limited way without changing human nature.

If we want proof of the all-pervading taint of sin, we have only to consider ourselves, and even our best selves. We can see it "In the jealousy which spoils our friendships, in the vanity we feel when we have done something pretty good, in the easy conversion of love into lust, in the meanness which makes us depreciate the efforts of other people, in the distortion of our judgment by our own self-interest, in our fondness for flattery, and our resentment of blame, in our self-assertive profession of fine ideals which we never begin to practise, and so on".¹ The Bible is supremely realist and takes account of facts as they are. It makes no pretence that with a little tolerance and with a little goodwill all round the world can be put right; that with a few economic and social adjustments happiness can be assured for mankind.

The Bible knows that man is "dead in trespasses and sins": that there is a barrier between him and God which he can do nothing whatever to remove; that there is a flaw in his nature which only God can put right. Unless we accept this, the rest of our Christian faith is much ado about nothing. But when the natural man really sees this, he kicks hard. I shall never forget a man who, when he grasped this, turned on me and said, "Do you expect me to come before God with empty hands and outstretched arms, and tell Him my life's a failure, and I can't live it without Him. I'm damned if I

¹ A. R. Vidler, *Secular Despair and Christian Faith*, p. 22.

will: I'm too darned proud." He was an honest man: but it was only when he got into that very position that he was able to find Christ.

What does God do for man? He gives him new life in Christ (ii. 5). He lifts him up with Him (ii. 6a). He makes him sit enthroned with Him in Christ Jesus (ii. 6b). Notice the parallels with the things that are said of Our Lord in i. 19-23—God raised Jesus from the dead, exalted Him to His right hand, and gave Him supremacy over all the powers of the universe. The Christian is to become so closely united with his Lord, that His experience becomes in a real sense our experience. As Luther put it, "All that is His becomes mine: all that is mine becomes His". Christ died for our sins, and bore our sins so that we need bear them ourselves no longer. But His death was also a break with the past, and His Resurrection the beginning of a new life, which is exactly what God gives the Christian—a break with the past and a new life. At His Ascension our Lord was exalted to God's right hand, by which the Bible means the place of God's power. God's power became His power, and therefore it is also the place of prevailing intercession. That, too, is God's purpose for the Christian—that we should sit with Him at God's right hand; that God's power should become our power. Not that we should get extra energy for our own purposes but for God's glory: that we, too, should intercede and prevail.

"We are his workmanship" (ii. 10). That sums it up. As the Archbishop of Canterbury has put it, "All is of God: the only thing which I can contribute to my own redemption is the sin from which to be redeemed".¹ That is the corollary of the fact that man is dead in trespasses and sins. Our salvation is God's doing, and God has a particular purpose in view. We are "created in Christ Jesus for good works which God afore prepared that we should walk in them".

¹ *Nature Man and God*, p. 401.

Do not degrade "good works" into running a church bazaar—it means God's purpose for your life which you must also accept if you want God's salvation. There is a sense in which we cannot have part of God's gift unless we have it all. A friend of mine, who had got himself in a mess through a particular weakness, wanted God's help and forgiveness to set him right; in other words, to become once again the sort of person he could respect. He wanted to be created in Christ Jesus unto self-respect, which he had decided he would prefer to walk in. But he had to be willing to accept God's right to his whole life. You can only be created in Christ Jesus if you are prepared to be created for good works which God afore prepared that you should walk in.

How does man receive God's gift? It is doubly important to be able to answer this question. It is important for our own sake, for until we know the answer we shall miss the new life in Christ that God offers us. It is important for the sake of others, for if we have discovered the new life in Christ, we shall want to pass it on. If a friend said to you, "You have got a secret of living that I should like to find", could you tell him how to find that secret? The heart of the matter is this—"By grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (ii. 8). We must see what the key words in this sentence mean. First then, *Saved*. There is a story that a Salvation Army lassie, finding herself in the same carriage with Bishop Westcott, said to him, "Brother, are you saved?" and received the unexpected reply, "Do you mean *sozomenos*, *sothesomenos* or *sesosmenos*?" The saintly Bishop was, of course, just being naughty. These three Greek words mean "one who is being saved", "one who will be saved", "one who has been saved"; and the Christian is all three. But Paul obviously means the third here. He is looking back to a past event, "have ye been saved", when we started on the way of salvation, which

includes not merely deliverance from hell hereafter (though Christians would do well to get their minds straight on that subject) but the whole process of the Christian life. The word "save" has a double reference. It means, first, deliverance—we are saved from something; and secondly, health—our Lord said to those He healed, "Thy faith hath saved thee, made thee whole". Salvation is, therefore, deliverance from the guilt and grip of sin, and restoration to moral and spiritual health.

Grace is undeserved kindness, free unmerited love. As a speaker once put it to some children, "Grace is God giving something to someone who doesn't deserve it the least little bit"; though we must remember that grace is not the gift of a thing but the loving attitude of a person who shows kindness to those who deserve nothing. That is the great message of the Bible from cover to cover. We find it in the book of Exodus where God delivered His people not because they deserved it, but because "I have seen the affliction of my people . . . I have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows and I am come down to deliver them" (Exod. iii. 7-8). That is grace. We see it in Hosea, who learned how God deals with His people from his own experience with his wife, who left him and sold herself to other men, ending up in slavery and shame. Hosea went and bought her back and restored her, not because she had any rights, for she had forfeited them all, but because he loved her. That is grace. "The word became flesh and dwelt among us." That is grace.

It is a thing most wonderful,
Almost too wonderful to be,
That God's own son should come from heaven
And die to save a child like me.

That is grace. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ Our Lord." That is grace: and *faith* is putting out your hand to receive the gift.

God has a purpose for our lives which is being thwarted by the sin which separates us from Him. Our Lord, the Word made flesh, came into this world to show us that purpose and to break through the barrier of sin. He died for our sins and rose again, and now offers us Himself to come into our lives to forgive and remake, to give us purpose and strength. It is for us to receive Him by faith—but even that faith is the gift of God. It is not that God hands it round to an arbitrarily selected few; but that you get faith, not by trying to work it up, but by looking at what God has done. Never tell a person that he must have more faith. It is as helpful as telling a blind man that he must have more sight. Tell him what God has done and wants to do for him.

A small boy in a seaside town had been presented with a bottle of ginger beer just before starting out for a picnic, and when he set out to climb up a cliff he insisted on taking this treasured possession with him. After a while he got stuck and could get no higher. He looked down and a sheer drop fell away beneath him and he could not get down. Eventually he saw a tuft of grass in front of him and realized that if he hung on to the ledge behind him he could reach forward and lever himself up on the tuft. Salvation was in sight: but then an awful thought occurred to him. The hand that had got to clutch the tuft was filled by the precious ginger beer bottle. He looked down and saw the sheer drop—he looked up and saw the tuft waiting to be grasped. The more he looked, the more he wanted it, and soon he forgot about the bottle which slipped from his hand as he put it out to grasp the tuft that meant safety. That is how many people confront our Lord. They know they need Him, but their hands are full of other things which would have to go if He came in. If you are in that position, do not try to work up a decision that you do not want to make, or a faith which you have not got. Think of Him who wants to come into your life, and of your need of Him, until the only thing you can

do is to ask Him in, just as simply as you would invite a friend into your house. "O Lord come into my life, for without Thee I am lost." Receive Him and then rely on His presence. "As many as receive him, to them gave he the right to become children of God" (John i. 12).

But how shall I know whether He has come or not? A good parallel is to be found in crossing a frontier from one country to another. You come to a notice or perhaps a post of some kind put up by the Government to tell you that this is the frontier. You go past the notice and everything seems the same. The view is the same, the people are the same, the language may be the same, the houses are the same. You feel the same, but you have the word of the Government that you are in a new country, and if you went on for 10 miles or so you would have also the evidence of your own senses; everything would be different, and it would be clear to you that you were in another country. What a fool you would be if you hung about by the frontier post asking yourself if you really had crossed! You must rely on the word of the Government and go on. So, in the Christian life, as we go farther on it becomes very clear that we are in a new life: "The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God" (Rom. viii. 16). Our own experience affords evidence—provided we do not hang about at the frontier asking ourselves whether we have crossed, but rely on the word of our Lord, and go on. In the first place we know He has come, not because we feel different, or because life is immediately changed, but because of things Our Lord says that have the whole backing of His character behind them: "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in" (Rev. iii. 20); "He that heareth my voice and believeth on him that sent me hath eternal life and cometh not into judgement, but hath passed out of death into life" (John v. 24). He is in the new country. Let him rely on this word of our Lord and go on.

CHAPTER IV

THE DIVINE GOSPEL AND ITS RESULTS

Ephesians ii. 11-iii. 21

A GOSPEL that does not work is no gospel. Therefore St. Paul must pass from the salvation to its results. The Gospel met the deepest needs of those who had accepted it, and the salvation of the individual was a step towards the summing up of all things in Christ. St. Paul writes as a Jew to a church largely Gentile; and if we are to catch his meaning we must realize the significance of this relationship.

JEW AND GENTILE IN THE FIRST CENTURY [ii. 11-16]

The Jews still had a national home in Palestine, but they were also scattered throughout the Mediterranean world. Wherever they went they took with them a high moral standard and a pure faith in one holy and righteous God whose nature, in contrast to those of the Gentile gods, was such that a decent and intelligent man could believe in Him. They lived in a world of idolatry, superstition and immorality, of moral and spiritual corruption such as St. Paul had described in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans. Their problem was how to avoid being dragged down morally and spiritually; and the Mosaic law was their solution, for it regulated every aspect of life. It gave rules about food—the way it was to be killed; the animals which might or might not be eaten, even the order in which certain foods must be eaten: rules about the Sabbath, e.g. no fire must be kindled, no work must be allowed, only a limited journey was permitted (even to-day a Jew in Jerusalem who wants to spend

the Sabbath by the sea at Tel Aviv, cannot get a bus to take him on the Sabbath): rules about worship which not only prescribed public duties but household ceremonies and even controlled the clothes to be worn: rules about purification, ceremonial washings and other rites of cleansing. Every day of the week, at every moment of the day, in every relationship of life the law had something to say to the Jew which reminded him that he was different.

Thus it was the law which separated the Jew from the Gentiles whom he despised for their idolatry and for the futility of their own religion "having no hope and without God in the world" (ii. 12). Moreover, they had no part in the true religion; for they were "separate from Christ" (i.e. from the Messiah—the reference is not to Jesus but to the Jewish belief that the Messiah's concern would be entirely with their national welfare), "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise" (ii. 12). The Jew was determined to maintain this separation and not to let the Gentile have any share in the promise of salvation unless he was prepared to accept and obey every jot and tittle of the law.

St. Paul had come up against this spirit, not only in his struggle with the Judaizing party within the Church who wanted to make Gentile Christians keep the full Jewish law, but also on his last visit to Jerusalem. For no Gentile was allowed to go beyond the outer courts of the Temple which were separated from the Temple proper by a fence, "The middle wall of partition", as Paul calls it, on which was an inscription in three languages. "No Gentile may enter within the fence and enclosure round the Temple. Whosoever is caught will have himself to blame that he is put to death." Paul was thought to have taken a Gentile beyond this notice, with the result that a riot followed, and it was only the prompt action of the Roman garrison which saved his life (Acts xxi. 27-35). The Temple was the very heart

of Judaism, and there as a symbol of all that the law stood for, was this drastic proclamation of separateness.

The Gentile world reacted in two different ways. Some, finding the Jews exclusive, returned the same spirit with an increasing fear, suspicion and hatred, which we find reflected in the pages of Tacitus (*Histories* v. 5): "They despise the gods of our country. . . . They have an inflexible loyalty and a ready care for each other, but a bitter hatred against everyone else." On the other hand, quite a number were attracted by Judaism. They saw, in contrast to the capricious and immoral deities of their own religions, a monotheism in which a man could believe with all his mind, which give sense and meaning and purpose to the world. They saw in the Jewish Synagogue community a brotherhood that contrasted with the disintegration of their own society. They saw moral standards that were nobler and purer than anything in the surrounding world. But, before they could have any share in this, they had to accept not only the 613 precepts of the law, but the elaborate extensions of the law introduced by the Rabbis which must have been nearer 6,013 or even 60,013! For example, the simple precept, "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk" (*Exod.* xxiii. 19), had been elaborated to mean that you must never eat milk and meat at the same meal. Still more offensive was the rite of circumcision. So it was the law which kept the Gentiles out and made a cleavage. That was the basis of "the enmity, even the law of commandments contained inordinances" (ii. 15), which was summed up in a typical symbol in the Temple—"the middle wall of partition" keeping the Gentile out.

THE NEEDS OF JEW AND GENTILE [ii. 17-22]

The situation is that of the parable of the Prodigal Son. The Jew, like the elder brother, was in the father's house. He had carefully avoided riotous living; he had not gone into the

far country. But his mind was out of harmony with the mind of the father, and he had no wish to see the younger brother come home. The Gentile, like the Prodigal Son, was in the far country; his need was more obvious and his condition very much less morally respectable. But at heart the needs of the two brothers were very much the same:

1. To get home and to be really at home in the father's house.
2. To be at peace with the other.
3. To have some satisfying work to do for and with the father.

These too were the needs of Jew and Gentile in relation to their Heavenly Father. Fundamental human nature has not changed, and so we must see how God meets these needs for us to-day.

1. *The Christian will be at home.* The Gentiles felt "strangers and sojourners". They were not at home in the world, and because they were homeless, they were restless. The same feeling has been expressed in our day by Hugh Walpole: "There is a disease that has increasingly attacked our world. It is the disease of homelessness. Very many of us seem to belong to no place, no purpose, scarcely to ourselves." Or to quote a prominent anti-Christian writer, Bertrand Russell: "Whenever you happen to take your children to the Zoo you may observe in the eyes of the apes, when they are not performing gymnastic feats or cracking nuts, a strange, strained sadness. One can almost imagine that they feel they ought to become men, but cannot discover the secret of how to do it. On the road of evolution they have lost their way; their cousins marched on, and they were left behind. Something of the same strain and anguish seems to have entered into the soul of civilized man. He knows there is something better than himself almost within his grasp, yet he does not know

where to seek it or how to find it." If Bertrand Russell did but know it, the trouble is that civilized man, like the Prodigal son, is away from the Father's house, on the farther side of a barrier of unforgiven sin; kept away though he does not know it, until he finds forgiveness. A far truer awareness of the situation is seen in a prayer made every day for three years by Venkayya (the first outcaste convert in what is now the Dornakal Diocese); "O great God, who art Thou? Where art Thou? Show Thyself to me."

It is the task of the Church to bring the answer "Now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off (away from the Father's home) are made nigh in the blood (the sacrificial death) of Christ" (ii. 13). God in Christ has borne our sin. In His Incarnation He made Himself one with all human life; in the end by dying a sinner's death He made Himself one with human sin, and knew, as only the sinless could, the horror of being separated from His Father by the sin that He bore. Therefore, in that death, sin stands exposed and condemned. It is the thing which brought Jesus to the Cross and robbed Him for a time of the sense of His Father's presence. That is its exposure and its condemnation. So God can and will forgive us without compromising His moral standards or ours. For nothing demoralizes so much as the suggestion, shattered once for all at Calvary, that sin does not matter.¹ We may, therefore, come to him and be at one with Him here and now in His family—"no more strangers and sojourners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God", at home in our Father's house.

¹ Compare Rom. iii. 25-26, Moffatt's trans. "This (i.e. the Cross) was to demonstrate the justice of God in view of the fact that sins previously committed during the time of God's forbearance had been passed over; it was to demonstrate his justice at that present epoch, showing that God is just himself and that he justifies man on the score of faith in Jesus."

2. *The Christian will be at peace with his fellow-men.* The outstanding fact of our world is its divisions: divided nations, divided colours, divided ideologies, divided castes; England and Germany; black and white; Nazi, Communist and Democrat; caste and outcaste; Jew and non-Jew; employers and employed; haves and have-nots . . . The divisions and the clashes of interest are real; it is worse than useless to close our eyes to them. If we are ever to overcome them we shall need three things:

First, an inner harmony. "A heart at peace with itself takes away occasions of wars," said a Quaker. For when a man is at home with God and with himself, he will feel no need to be jealous. Peace within tends to create peace around us, and conflict within, conflict around us. For the spectacles through which we see the world are dyed with the colour of our own hearts. This principle is illustrated by the story of the two temperate ladies who had sampled champagne for the first time. "My dear, you are drunk," said one of them to the other after a glass or two, "it's no good trying to deceive me. I can see you're drunk; you've got two noses". She found her state of mind reflected in her picture of the world. If our hearts are restless, we shall see restlessness in the world, accuse other people of it and so create it. By reconciling men to God, our Lord creates the first indispensable condition of peace; for when men are at peace with themselves they are not disposed to pick quarrels with their neighbours.

Secondly, a stronger force than those which remind men of their differences. The law, which by emphasizing differences at every point made the Jew feel separate and was therefore the basis of the enmity, had a tremendous emotional hold over him. It reminded him of his home where he had learned it, of his mother who had taught it to him, of the most sacred moments of his life when he had seen its ritual practised, of the most inspiring episodes of his nation's life

which it commemorated, and of the fellowship of his fellow-countrymen to which it bound him. It was, therefore, useless to remind him of the common humanity and common interests which he shared with non-Jews. For these factors were emotionally powerless in contrast to the law which was inextricably connected with all the things that meant most to him. But through the Cross had come God's forgiveness, the most overwhelming experience of his life—an experience that was freely given and had nothing to do with the law. Therefore, beside the Cross which brought this overwhelming experience the law paled into insignificance. The barrier of the "middle wall of partition" was still there in the Temple, but it no longer counted, for Gentiles could now come into God's presence through Christ. It was made unreal because the Gentile shared this new experience on equal terms; so the enmity was gone. "For He is our peace who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances" (ii. 14-15).

The same applies to our world where the things which remind people of their differences have a far greater emotional hold than those which remind them of what they have in common. This applies not only to the big world-scale divisions, but to the divisions between smaller cliques and parties within the Church, and even to personal quarrels. The other man's offensive ways have more power to irritate than rational considerations have to soothe. Idealists appeal to warring sides to remember their common humanity. (Read any political speech on the international situation in England or America during the decade before this war.) But common humanity means nothing in comparison with the "*Internationale, Ein Volk, Ein Reich, Ein Fuehrer* or *God Save the King*. Rational appeals to common humanity can never overcome the emotional forces that divide.

The only way the world has of suspending a hatred is to

introduce a more powerful hatred. For example, as a nation we are far more united than we ever have been before because we now have something bigger to fear and hate than we have ever had before. But such a unity does not outlast the object of hatred. The only source of lasting reconciliation is an overwhelming experience of the love and forgiveness of God, which becomes the most important thing in life, so that all who share it have the deepest thing in common. That is how Our Lord became our peace and broke down every wall of partition that ever has existed or will exist. That is how He "abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments" (ii. 15). He made the law and the other dividing factors irrelevant: the Cross became the only thing that mattered. The Authorized Version is perfectly right when it introduces the word "together" in ii. 5-6, where Paul describes the Christian experience. His thought is that Jew and Gentile were quickened, etc., together with each other. They had been together in an overwhelming experience; this gave them an overwhelming experience of being together.

Thirdly, the differences must become assets instead of being merely divisive. When we receive the gift of forgiveness and new life, we are born again into the family of God with the other people who belong to God. With them we are so closely linked to Our Lord that we are His Body "reconciled in one body" (ii. 16). The differences which before only divided us are now seen to be different contributions and so have their point. They exist to perform different functions in the body and so are all necessary. For a man's body requires all sorts of different parts. You cannot have a body that is all hands or all noses. So, if the body of Christ is to be complete and to express Him truly, Jews cannot be its chief or only constituent. There must be Gentiles also; for His purpose is that "He might create in himself of the twain one new man" (ii. 15). Nor can it be totally or mainly composed of one kind of Gentile—Englishmen or Europeans.

Men of every race, temperament, type and class will all have a necessary contribution and they can all value each other, because without the other each is incomplete himself, and so is the Body.

That has been illustrated for me by a student who is a German and a Jew. His work gives me a light on the Bible and on Christian doctrine that I get from no English student, not because he is cleverer than they, but because he gives the contribution that could only come from a German and a Jew. So, too, the Chinese Church has shown us a marvellous spirit in facing its troubles in war-time, and in its attitude to its enemies. No doubt missionaries from every part of the world could tell us of special contributions to the life of the whole Church that can only come from the particular nation among which they work. In other words, we see in the Church the outworking of the thought of chapter one; for the racial divisions are being summed up or given new point in Christ. Those differences, once apparently only pointless causes of division, a mistake that a God of love could only have made in a fit of absent-mindedness, are now being seen to have a point, they are becoming valuable, and we know that we would not be without them. Each forms part of "the one new man" who is being created in Christ. He has "made both one"—which could only be done by giving them differing but essential functions in the one body. Therefore, we shall not try to treat natural differences as if they did not exist. Jew and Gentile, man and woman, black and white, are different. In one sense they are not equal, but they are of equal value to God, as Christ died for each and each has a unique and essential contribution to make to the life of the Body in which they are being summed up in Christ. And, as those differences are found to have their value in the life of the Body, it is shown that God is not a fool carelessly creating incompatibles. So St. Paul can say that it is now through the Church that the

manifold wisdom of God is made known (iii. 10). What a task for the Church! We have first to realize in the life of the Church this truth of peace and unity through the Cross of Christ by overcoming the barriers of sect, race and personal antagonism that divide us, and secondly to preach this message in power to the world.

3. *The Christian will have a work to do for and with his Father.* This will give him a satisfying purpose in life. Paul was impressed by the futility of the unconverted Gentile's existence (e.g. iv. 17). The same sense of futility has bitten deep into the heart of our generation. For example Winifred Holtby has told how she was present at the Dedication of one who had been at Oxford with her, and was going out to China as a missionary. "It must be nice," she wrote, "to decide to dedicate oneself to one particular form of service as she did when she was about twelve, and then train, prepare, and go and do it. And on your going to have 800 people pray over you and say that you do right. There is a satisfactory definiteness and conviction then about things. The difficulty is to what can one dedicate oneself?"¹ That last sentence is the question of thousands to-day. Many of them almost welcomed the war with its consequent demands for service. But ask them after a few months in the army how they are getting on and the answer will be that they are "browned off"; like sausages that are done, but still have to be left toughening in the pan, ready but not needed—no satisfying purpose. Noel Coward has summed it up in his *Twentieth-century Blues*:

In this strange illusion,
Chaos and confusion,
People seem to lose their way:
Nothing left to strive for,
Love or keep alive for.
Sing hey hey, call it a day.

¹ *Letters to a Friend*, p. 196.

Why, why,
If there's a God in the sky
Why doesn't He grin
High, high,
High up above this twentieth-century din?

There you have it—futility, frustration, no satisfying purpose. But when a man is converted, he is not only made to be at home with his Father so that he is no more a “stranger and a sojourner”; he not only has the secret of overcoming divisions because he is a fellow-citizen with the saints and of the household of God; he is given a satisfying purpose in life. He grows with all the saints into the Body of Christ which must do Christ's work in the world; he is built with all the saints into a holy temple which must be a sign of God's presence in the world. For the Temple was not, as we are apt to think, the building in which men worship; it was thought of as the actual dwelling-place of God and the visible symbol of His presence. The people worshipped outside the Temple and in front of it. We must bear this in mind when we consider our Lord's words: “Destroy this temple, and in three days, I will raise it up” (John ii. 19). They thought he meant putting together the stones of the Temple at Jerusalem. “But he spake of the temple of his body” (John ii. 21). The reference is not only to the body that rose from the grave, but also to His Body the Church which was thenceforth to be the place where men see God and worship.

In spite of all its scandals and imperfections it is still in the Church that people see God. So we find that members of higher castes in India who have been impervious to Christian preaching are now being converted by seeing the life of out-caste Christian communities. Or to take an example nearer home—a young fellow in the R.A.F., on being asked what had led to his conversion, said, “I think it was really because I came across in our Youth Fellowship a spirit that I have

never met before or since". The members of that Fellowship were not all at the very highest peaks of Christian living and experience. But they had a knowledge of our Lord which had been handed down to them in the continuous life of the Church from the apostles and prophets. It was Christ who held them together and gave them a spirit of fellowship. It was He who "sums them up", He is the integrating factor holding them together in an ordered unity just as a head corner stone dovetails together at the top of the joint two walls which might otherwise fall outwards. So they were builded together into a holy temple, a habitation of God in the Spirit, where a man could see God and worship. "So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded for a habitation of God in the spirit" (ii. 19-22).

THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY [iii. 1-21]

Can you wonder that St. Paul was profoundly grateful that he had been given an "understanding in the mystery of Christ; which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed" by the Son of God in His incarnate life, His atoning death, and His risen power in the Church "unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to wit that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel". There is only one gospel, the gospel of Christ, which has brought hidden mystery to light. But St. Paul had discovered that it not only gives to men a right relationship with God, it also gives them a place in the fellowship of the Body of Christ and a share in God's purpose for the universe. Can

you wonder that he was overwhelmed that such a man as he should have been entrusted with such a gospel! "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (iii. 8). The same task belonged to his converts and belongs to us. Therefore, we must share the same wonder and be driven to the same prayer and the same thanksgiving (see iii. 14-21):

1. For the strengthening of the Spirit.
2. For the indwelling of Christ which roots in love.
3. For comprehension with all saints (notice the order—first love, then comprehension).
4. For fulfilling unto all the fulness of God.

But notice that the prayer will only be answered "according to the power that worketh in us" (iii. 20). There is the rub! we must also be driven to a deeper consecration and appropriation of God's power.

CHAPTER V

THE DIVINE COMMUNITY: ITS UNITY, GIFTS AND GROWTH

Ephesians iv. 1-16

GOD'S purpose is to sum up all things in Christ. The Church is both the instrument of that purpose, for He works through it; and also its visible expression, for where the Church is true to itself, there, and there alone we have a first instalment of God's purpose. Therefore this epistle on God's purpose is full of the thought of the Church. We found it in chapter one with its thought of the Church as the Body of Christ (i. 22-23). Again in chapter two the whole thought depends on the Church; for God meets man's need by making one new man, by building us into a temple, by making us fellow-members of the household of God. Or again look at the metaphors with which St. Paul describes the Church. It is the Body of Christ (i. 23; iii. 6; iv. 4, 12, 16; v. 23, 30); it is the family of God (ii. 19); it is the temple in which God dwells (ii. 21-22); it is the bride of Christ (v. 25-32).

St. Paul's epistles are often divided into doctrinal and practical sections. With chapter four we begin the practical section of our epistle. So then St. Paul begins his practical section with a passage on the Church. For to St. Paul the existence of the Church was a practical consideration. The Oxford Conference on Church, Community and State said in its message: "The first duty of the Church is that it be in very deed the Church", which is very close to St. Paul's meaning here. He has shown them God's purpose of saving men into the Church as a stage in the summing up of all

things in Christ; that they have been brought into God's purpose through the Church. Then they must remember what the Church is and be the Church. "I beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called" (iv. 1). To that end there are three things about the Church which they need to remember:

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH [iv. 2-6]

The Church by its very nature is one. To St. Paul this was a fact not a pious hope. It is one body. Its members have one God for their Father, Christ as their one Lord to whom they owe everything; by the work of the one Holy Spirit they have access to God; they have a common faith and though their callings were different they were called in one hope, and that a hope of unity; by the common sacrament of baptism their new life was sealed. It remains for them to preserve the unity that the spirit gave them in the one body, of which the bond and basis was the peace made at the Cross.

Do you see what a travesty of St. Paul's thought we have in some uses of the phrase "the unity of the Spirit"? It is not just an inner unity of feeling, a vague friendliness and tolerance in spite of outward divisions. It is *the* unity which *the* Spirit, the Holy Spirit, gave them in the one body through the peace made at the Cross. The body is not only one in inward faith, it also has one baptism. For St. Paul is not content with inner unity and holiness. It must be expressed sacramentally by an outward unity. Think of his descriptions of the Church—the body which is of no use if it is cut up into little bits; the family which is a travesty of family if it cannot meet at a family meal; the temple, not a block of self-contained flats. We cannot escape this conclusion by trying to refer St. Paul's remarks to the invisible Church. A temple is a visible symbol of the presence of God. A body is a *visible* embodiment of an inward personality or it is nothing. If you make Christ's Body invisible, you make Him invisible.

The Church by its nature is one, therefore it must be one. But in the light of the missionary task reunion is even more urgent. Moslems, for example, believe that our divisions are a Divine judgement upon Christians for idolatry, as the use of images in the unreformed Churches appeared to them. Therefore, our divisions confirm their unbelief. Or to take an example from India, an outcaste once came to Bishop Azariah and told him that his people had decided to give up Hinduism and were considering which religion they should accept as likely to give them a fuller and higher life. When Christianity was mentioned, the Indian leader reminded the Bishop of the many divisions within the Christian Church. He told the Bishop how his people had said: "We are united in Hinduism, but we shall become divided in Christianity."—"And, sir," he went on, "I had no answer to give them."—"And," added the Bishop, "need I say that I had no answer to give either."

At the same time we must not let the problem of reunion be an escape from facing divisions which meet us nearer home, the cliques and quarrels which split congregations, the frictions which divide families and come between us and other people. God has given us through His Spirit the overwhelming link of a common experience of our Lord and His forgiveness. It is for us in our dealings with our fellow-Christians not to create this unity, but to preserve it by remembering that we owe everything to the one Saviour of us all. So shall we "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love."

THE GIFTS OF THE CHURCH [iv. 7-12]

God's gifts are distributed to all. Paul has been emphasizing the body to such an extent that it might seem the individual is of no significance, as if our personality is to be repressed and

stamped out in order to be submerged in the life of the body. But on the contrary it is just because we belong to the Body that each single one is important, and that "to each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (iv. 7). Considered purely as individuals, we certainly are very insignificant. But, as Moffat translates it, "each one of us is granted his own grace"; therefore none must feel he is negligible or useless in the life of the Church. He has some vital function to perform in the life of the body, some contributions which he alone can provide.

Take, for example, the witness of the Church in public affairs. It is often said that "the Church ought to say something about this" or "do something about that". In itself such a statement is quite true, for surely Christ has something to say and do about social, political and industrial problems. And if the Church is His Body, then He will say it and do it through the Church. But the trouble is that when people say, "Why doesn't the Church do something?" they usually mean, "Why don't the Bishops say something?" which often does more harm than good. Read *Christianity and World Affairs* by A. E. Zimmern, a Christian who is also an expert on international affairs, and you will see how disastrous clerical pronouncements on international affairs can be and have been. The Church must act in political and social affairs, but it must act through those who are called to that function and have the needed gift—not through bishops, priests and deacons who are called to the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments, but through you who are called to the ministry of business or teaching or politics or whatever it may be.

St. Paul calls the magistrate "a minister of God for good" (Rom. xiii. 4). In the same way, every Christian may find in the work to which he is called a ministry of God as real as that of the clergy. If the Church is going to act on the

political, industrial or social affairs of the world, it will do so through Christian experts and a Christian public opinion. The former are necessary because goodwill without knowledge is useless and often harmful, the latter because the best laid and most Christian of plans can go no further unless there is some rudimentary Christian public opinion which is prepared to accept the sacrifices involved in operating the plan. Therefore, if you are in the right job, it is a call from God to be as efficient as possible and as Christian as possible in it. For your contribution is needed if the Church is to do its job in your firm or profession. Over some area of life, however small, you have the unique gift of being the Christian expert. And whoever or whatever you are, you have a call from God to take an intelligent interest in public affairs; for your influence is needed if ever there is to be anything like a Christian public opinion. To each of us God has given a ministry in the Body of Christ, and that body is very much the poorer because so many people assume that they must either be given a ministry of the Word and Sacraments or none at all.

God's Gifts are Men. "Wherefore he saith, when he ascended on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts untō men. (Now this, he ascended, what is it but that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens that he might fill all things.) And he gave some to be apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers" (iv. 8-11).

What does this mean? Remember that when a victorious general returned to his capital city he had a triumphal procession. His prisoners followed behind his chariot in chains and he distributed the spoils as largesse to the people. So Christ at His Ascension is likened to a conqueror returning to his city with his captives in his train. We find the

same thought in 2 Cor. ii. 14, "Thanks be unto God which always leadeth us in triumph in Christ", i.e. as captives in Christ's triumphal procession. Then follows the distribution of spoils. Christ's distribution consists in qualified men specially endowed with the necessary gifts for some particular work. "He gave some to be apostles; and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers," and of course many other gifts besides those mentioned, for every Christian has something to do towards the Church's work in the world, and is therefore a gift to the Church.

But all are first captives. We must become captives in order to become gifts; surrender is the price of usefulness. The Jews wanted to serve God without the surrender that would have made them captives. "Seeking to establish their own righteousness they did not subject themselves (or surrender) to the righteousness of God" (Rom. x. 3). They had to put up their hands and surrender in their struggle to get right with themselves and with God, and let God in Christ do for them what they could not do for themselves, so becoming the captives, or, as St. Paul loved to put it, the slaves of Jesus Christ. No doctrine of the Church, however imposing, can ever by-pass the necessity of personal religion, the surrender to Jesus Christ of our right to ourselves.

God's Gifts are Gifts to the Church. If you have surrendered, nothing that you have belongs to yourself. It belongs to your captor, and Jesus Christ who took us captive has given us to His body the Church to be its members. A limb of a body, a leg or an arm is useless by itself; its function is in the body. So God's gifts are given for the building up of the Body of Christ: otherwise they are wasted. This sounds almost platitudinous. And yet our attitude often contradicts it; we say in effect, "I have a gift, and I must use it irrespective of other considerations, a

spiritual life I must at all costs maintain, a gospel I must preach, a vision I must express". So far, so good, but our attitude goes on to say, "Therefore, I cannot wait for those who do not see the vision. I cannot bother about a Church which seems stuffy and dead." Sometimes we are overwhelmed, not so much by any conviction of a gift we want to express, as by disappointment at the low standards of the Church as we know it, and we say to ourselves, "If only the keen people could get together and leave the others to go their own way, how much faster the work would be done". But God's gifts are not qualities given to men to use as they think right, but men given to the Church to be used for its good.

The Church Missionary Society owes its existence to men who saw this principle. In their day the Methodists, under very great provocation which we must neither forget nor minimize, had begun to leave the Church of England in order to give free expression to evangelical truth. The evangelical founders of the C.M.S. and those who thought with them remained in the Church of England, though subjected to the same hostility and opposition. In time their message permeated, to a considerable extent, other sections of the Church, and Evangelicals have learned a great deal from those other sections. Their gifts were given to the body. But how much richer the whole Church would have been if the Methodists had been able to remain in fellowship with the Church of England, and share with others their many great gifts, as well as receive from others what they too have to give.

Moreover, when we feel that we want to wash our hands of the Church because of all its failings, we must remember that the Church is the Body of Christ, even when it is dead. For you judge me by my body, its sounds and movements. So, also, however loudly you may proclaim that you and your keen friends have got the real thing and the Church is

a mere counterfeit, men will actually judge Christ, not by keen and consistent souls like you, but by the Church. The failings and successes of the visible Church speak far more loudly than the virtues of unattached Christians, a fact to which their spiritual pride sometimes blinds them. Therefore, if we are concerned for the honour of our Master, we shall be concerned for the welfare of the Church as a visible institution, and especially for that section to which we belong.

The only gifts here mentioned are of those who have the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. If we see for what purpose those ministries are given to the Church, we shall discover what we ought to expect from our parson. Our Lord gave apostles . . . "for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ" (iv. 12). Notice in the Revised Version these are not the parallel clauses "for . . . for . . . for" as in the Authorized Version, which would be made clearer by the omission of the comma after "saints". The saints are perfected in order to bring about the work of ministering and building up of the body. The word translated "perfect" is not the usual word with the leading thought of "complete", but another word whose meaning is to equip, to bring a thing into its proper condition to perform its function. It is used, for instance, in Mark i. 19 of getting nets into order. So the parson's job is to equip or fit the saints, i.e. ordinary Christians, for the discharge of their functions in the body, viz. the work of ministering and the building up of the Body. Ministering here has no technical sense; it means any form of service. The Body is built up when new members are added by being won to a living faith in our Lord. So we may further define the parson's job: it is to equip the laity for a life of service and for witness before others.

It is generally taken for granted that the parson must do

the evangelistic work of the Church. But the teaching of the New Testament as we have it here is very different; he is to train the laity to do it. The principle is very sound, for the layman is in so much closer touch with ordinary people than the parson can be. There can hardly be a single person in the country who does not meet a Christian layman during the course of the year, though there are thousands who never meet a parson. So the layman, being in so much closer and more natural contact with non-Christians, is in a position to do the job, if he only will. But, as Bishop Taylor Smith once put it: "So many Christians are like the St. Lawrence river, frozen at the mouth." When did you last win someone for Our Lord? Has God ever used you to do so? Pray that He will.

In the light of this, how important the work of the clergy becomes. We have learned as a nation that it is courting disaster to send an army into the field without the best and most modern equipment. It is our duty as clergy to equip Christ's army in its war for the souls of men. We must teach as thoroughly as we can both the Bible and Christian doctrine, and we must also train the laity in evangelistic work. We have no right to leave these things to chance. One result of this work of equipping the saints is to be "that we be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine". But that is exactly what so many Christians are. They are unstable because they have no solid basis of doctrine at the heart of their Christian life. They are full of good intentions, but vague in their thinking. They do not know their Bibles, they do not know what they believe or why; and the fault is very largely the parson's. But the war has shown us the terrific force of an idea, once it is firmly implanted in a human mind. Therefore, if a man wishes to be a steadfast and effective Christian, he must study the Bible—not merely browse over a few verses, but study it with all the intelligence, concentration, and

prayer that he can give; and study Christian doctrine until he knows clearly where he stands.

THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH [iv. 13-16]

The Church's growth consists not only in increase in size, by the addition of new members, but also in the perfecting of those who are already members. It is of the latter that St. Paul speaks here.

Growth into Christ. He is the test, we measure how tall we are spiritually by standing beside Him. We hope to come one day "to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (iv. 13), i.e. of Christ as He will be fulfilled in His Body the Church. But, just because we belong to that Body, we can never be content with the thought of growing up *beside* Him; we must "grow up in all things *into* Him which is the head, even Christ" (iv. 15), so that our union becomes closer and closer until we can say with St. Paul: "for me to live is Christ" (Phil. i. 21). Here, then, are the first two tests of growth:

(1) As we grow up beside Him we must become more Christlike.

(2) We must grow closer to Him so that He becomes more and more real and every part of us is in touch with Him.

Growth into the unity of the Body. To believe in Christ is to believe in One whose body is part of Himself. To be joined to Christ is to be joined to Christ in His Body. St. Paul discovered this on his way to Damascus when he heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" He had never persecuted Jesus in the flesh. He had only persecuted Him in His disciples who were now His own risen humanity, His Body. To meet Christ is to meet Him in His Body, the Church; so to grow into Christ is to grow into the unity of His Body. This is brought out by St. Paul's use of

singulars and plurals in iv. 13-14. "Till we (plural) all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man (singular) that we may be no longer children (plural) . . . but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into him which is the Head, even Christ" (iv. 13-15). We start off as separate individuals; we grow into a unity in the Body of Christ, "a full-grown man"; if we fall back, self-assertion divides the body, and instead of being a full-grown man, we are all children, separate individuals again. So here we have a further test of the Christian growth. Growth into Christ will be growth into His Body. There was an Oxford undergraduate a few years ago who had what he called "a second blessing" during the vacation. It certainly brought him a great increase of spiritual intensity. But when he came back to Oxford he could not have anything to do with those other Christians in the college who did not share exactly the same experience. It was not true Christian growth because it was not growth into the Body. How easy, on the other hand, it would have been for St. Paul to say that his Gentile converts could grow much faster in the Christian life apart from the hindrances provided by their obstinate Jewish fellow-Christians, and so to have formed a separate Gentile Church. But he knew that Christian growth is not merely growth of separate individual Christian lives. It is "the increase of the body unto the building-up of itself in love". (iv. 16).

Growth of the Body depends on our growth. The reason why each of us "must grow up in all things into him which is the head, even Christ", is that it is from Him that "all the body is fitly framed and knit together". Therefore the body only grows as each of us grows; for it is "through that which every joint supplieth according to the working in due measure of each several part", that it "maketh the increase of the body

unto the building-up of itself in love" (iv. 16). This is true both of the Church's worship and of its witness.

The reality of the Church's worship depends in the last resort not on the parson but on the worshipping congregation. Most people come to church expecting to be put into a worshipful frame of mind when they get there, with the result that they are a drag on the whole proceedings. When, however, people come already in touch with God, instead of deadening the service they make a real, though unconscious contribution. There is a church where the parson is a sick man who feels he must hold on for the duration of the war; he appears to have lost a great deal of his spiritual drive; his unconscious rudeness in personal dealings offends many people; his voice is irritating; his mannerisms in the reading-desk and pulpit appalling. But the church is still full and live because in the congregation are many worshipping Christian people who are growing up into Christ. That church grows not through that which the parson supplieth, but "through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part".

The Church's witness depends on the growth of the individual just as much. It has been said that we all tend to over-estimate our own importance and under-estimate our own influence. We are apt to think that there are some things which are our own business and no one else's. But "none of us liveth to himself". No one even sins unto himself alone; our sins always affect other people. We may think that we can entertain jealous or resentful or impure thoughts without harming anyone else. But what we think affects, however imperceptibly, what we are, and upon what we are our influence depends. Therefore, our conscious, and still more, our unconscious influence will be weaker or worse than it would have been. It may, indeed, be weaker by just that vital fraction which would have turned the scale for good in another person's life; and so the Church does not

grow because we do not grow. We must therefore "grow up in all things into Him, which is the head, even Christ; from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together, through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building-up of itself in love" (iv. 15-16).

CHAPTER VI

THE DIVINE COMMUNITY: ITS WALK AND WARFARE

Ephesians iv. 17-vii. 20

THE rest of the epistle shows the kind of life which befits members of the Body in which God is summing up all things in Christ. They are part of God's purpose of unity; therefore they must show the qualities which make for unity.

St. Paul deals first (in iv. 17-v. 21) with the general principles of Christian conduct. Here we shall try to pick out the three most important strands of his thought. He then goes on to speak of a number of particular relationships in which Christians may find themselves. We shall only consider in detail one of these as an illustration—that of master and slave—before closing with the thought of the Christian's warfare.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN LIVING [iv. 17-v. 21]

1. *Walk in love.* The whole of the section is a contrast which might be summed up "no longer walk as the Gentiles walk" (iv. 17) . . . but "walk in love" (v. 2). Here again we may distinguish three strands in St. Paul's thinking:—

First, *the opposite of love.* In order to make clear what love is he reveals by contrast its opposite as exemplified in the life of the heathen. "No longer walk as the Gentiles walk." All life is walking, progress: you cannot stand still. If it's not a pilgrim's progress, it is a pagan's progress that St. Paul unfolds in iv. 17-19. Notice the stages:

1. Vanity or futility of mind (iv. 17)—no sense of purpose.
2. Darkened in understanding (iv. 18)—no sense of truth.

Compare what St. Paul says later on in v. 6: "Let no man deceive you with empty words." It is the easiest thing in the world to invent reasons for doing what we want to do, and in the end we believe them. "The heart is *deceitful above all things* and it is desperately sick" (Jer. xvii. 9). The modern psychological teaching about rationalization, etc., has only confirmed the Biblical insight into human nature.

3. Ignorant of God, "alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them" (iv. 10)—no sense of God.
4. Hardening of heart . . . being past feeling (iv. 18-19)—no sense of shame. They no longer feel any qualms about things which once used to make them very uneasy.
5. Whole-hearted sin, "they gave themselves up to lasciviousness" (iv. 19)—no sense of decency or modesty.
6. Making a business of impurity, "make a trade of all uncleanness", (iv. 19 margin)—no restraint. Some people do not seem content with going wrong themselves; they are so wholehearted that they must introduce others to their ways.

It is not implied that every pagan gets into this state. This is obviously contradicted by the splendid lives of many of them. But this is the direction in which every life is facing which is out of touch with God; and this is the kind of life which will be reproduced in a community in which Christian influence is not active. St. Paul sums up the whole thing in the last phrase of iv. 19, "with greediness", or perhaps we should get the sense better if we said "with self-gratification". There is the root principle of the pagan's progress. We may gratify ourselves in respectable as well as unrespectable ways, though the principle of self-gratification magnified in

non-Christian society will lead to exactly the kind of life St. Paul here describes. Yet St. Paul is speaking not to pagans but to Christians, because all these stages are possible for us as much as for others, but we have a standard with which we may not trifle and a King whom we must obey. . . . The Christian has made his choice, therefore these things must go. They are incompatible with our experience of Christ. "Ye did not so learn Christ; if so be that ye heard him, and were taught in Him, even as truth is in Jesus" (iv. 20-21). Truth is in Jesus, not only in the sense that He is our standard, but also that He is true man. He is what God means by man. So when people say of sin that it is only natural, we shall reply that it is only natural for man by himself, but that it is not natural for man to be by himself. His true nature is to be found in trustful communion with God, as we learn from the life of our Lord. That is the reality about human nature. Therefore the Christian life is not flying in the face of facts. It corresponds to the biggest and deepest facts.

Secondly, *the meaning of love*. The word "love" is a blank cheque: it can mean almost anything. We can say that God so loved that He gave or that a man so loved that he snatched—the same word in each case, but two different things. Christian love was a new thing that came into the world with Christ; therefore the writers of the New Testament never call it by the word commonly used for love in their time. They took a colourless word very seldom used before, with no definite associations, and brought it into common use—virtually a new word for an entirely new thing. St. Paul therefore was not content to exhort his readers to love. He had to indicate what he meant by love. "Be ye therefore imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love even as Christ also loved you and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God" (v. 1-2). The Christian is to love as God loves, he is to love with the love of Christ.

St. Paul's teaching here is a *précis* of our Lord's in the Sermon on the Mount. "Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? . . . Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. v. 44-48). The difference between God's love and ordinary human love is that we love people because they are lovable; we, like the publicans, love those whose appearance or character or manners stir up love in us. But such a love has not really got beyond the principle of self-gratification. We love them because they gratify some need, taste or instinct within us. God, on the other hand, sends His rain on the just and the unjust, and loves them both alike; He does not love the one because he is lovable, and the other in spite of his being unlovable, or because He can perceive something lovable in him that others cannot see. He loves because it is His nature to love. Love is not stirred up in Him by the loveliness of lovable people; it proceeds out of Him on all people alike because He is love.

Therefore in order to love in the Christian sense we must have a new nature. Anyone can love those whom he finds lovable. "Do not even the publicans the same?" But if we are going to love indiscriminately because we are loving, then we must have a loving nature which only Christ can give. It is therefore a foolish and dangerous illusion to suppose that we can have Christian love or Christian ethics or Christian civilization without Christian doctrine and experience. The only way to Christian love is to be born again of the Spirit or, as St. Paul puts it, "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (iv. 23). Then it will be Christ who loves through us. "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me" (Gal ii. 20) and,

St. Paul might have added, "loveth in me". For "the love of God", God's love for other people "is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. v. 5).

Thirdly, *the importance of love*. We can see this most clearly if we notice how frequently St. Paul has to add the words "in love" when describing some Christian gift or quality, as if to show that they are all vain without love—

- i. 4. "Holy and without blemish before him in love." Without love, holiness is harsh, unattractive bigotry.
- iii. 17. "Being rooted and grounded in love." The Christian life without love is a mere travesty.
- iv. 2. "Forbearing one another in love." Patience and forgiveness without love may be nothing more than an unprincipled desire for a quiet life, symptoms of a spineless character.
- iv. 15. "Speaking truth in love." Truth without love may be no more than a wounding and damaging expression of personal annoyance.
- iv. 16. "Maketh the increase of the body unto the build-up of itself in love." The history both of Roman Catholicism and of Protestantism shows that you may have an apparently live and vigorous Church, growing through that which every joint supplieth, which is nevertheless an instrument of oppression, because it is without love.

There is another statement about love in the Ephesians which is apt to be passed over without attracting much attention. "Husbands love your wives even as Christ also loved the church" (v. 25). At first glance it sounds platitudinous. Of course Christians ought to love their wives. But remember that Paul is not using the ordinary word for the natural love of husband and wife, but the new Christian word for the Divine Christian love, the love with which

Christ loves the Church. So he is giving us a principle that applies not only to marriage but to all Christian friendships. They must have mutual attraction *plus* the specifically Christian love, so there you have the greatest gift of God in the order of creation combined with the greatest gift of God in the order of redemption: that is why a Christian home and a Christian friendship can be such a wonderful experience. This fact is also a call to us to see that our friendships have that something *plus*. In them we must love as David and Jonathan loved: we must also love as Christ loved the Church.

2. *Walk as members of the Body.* We have seen how Christian love depends on the Christian Gospel of new life through Christ. At every point Christian conduct and Christian doctrine go together. Therefore the practical part of this epistle is full of references to the subjects previously mentioned in the doctrinal section. We noticed how the practical section opens (iv. 1-6) with a discussion of the doctrine of the Church. But even the purely ethical section contains many references to Christian doctrine especially to the doctrine of the Church. Hence we find that in his ethical discussions St. Paul frequently mentions such doctrinal topics as membership in the Body (iv. 25-29; v. 21-30); life in Christ and His Lordship of the body (v. 8, 10, 17, 22, 23; vi. 1, 5-9, 10), the spirit and the Christian hope (iv. 30; v. 5, 18; vi. 17, 18). He is applying to conduct the doctrines expounded in the first part of the epistle. The thought that underlies much of St. Paul's ethical teaching, even when it is not stated, is that "we are members one of another" (iv. 25). Christians must walk in the light of that fact; so the sins which St. Paul singles out for condemnation are all sins against fellowship.

Lying is to be exchanged for truthfulness (iv. 25); for lying breaks up trust, and where there is no trust there is no fellowship.

Resentment is to give way to reconciliation (iv. 26). The sun is not to go down upon our wrath, for which St. Paul uses an expressive word whose original meaning is swelling. Perhaps you know the feeling of something swelling up inside you which wants to burst, a feeling which is condemned because it lets the devil in ("neither give place to the devil"). The devil always gets in through the gap between two Christians.

Stealing (iv. 28) must give place to honest work so that we may be able to help others; in other words, so that we shall be more useful members of the fellowship.

Foul talk (iv. 29) is to go, because it does not edify or build up the Body of Christ, the temple in which the Spirit dwells. But St. Paul makes it clear that we are not to become pious bores instead. Our speech is to be "good for edifying as need may be". It is to "give grace to them that hear". Grace is not used here in a theological sense. It means rather that our conversation is to be gracious, to give pleasure to people. The alternative to being foul is not necessarily to be grim.

Bad temper (iv. 31) must give way to kindness and forgiveness for God has forgiven us all.

Immorality and everything dark and furtive belong to the time when we walked in darkness, therefore they must go now that we walk in the light. There is no reference to the corporate idea, but immorality obviously destroys fellowship as it is a sin against personal relationship, using others merely as a means to our own passing pleasure.

3. Walk with discernment. Neither rules nor good intentions are enough. Rules are not enough because they make a man righteous, in a certain sense, but they cannot make him good.

I never cut my neighbour's throat;
My neighbour's purse I never stole;
I never spoiled his house and land;
But God have mercy on my soul.

For I am haunted night and day,
By all the deeds I have not done;
O unattempted loveliness!
O costly valour never won!

There is of course a place for rules, they are the minimum without which Society would collapse. But rules can never guide us into the way of love. For love does not stop when decency or justice or duty has been done. Hence the man in the parable of the talents (Matt. xxv. 14-30), who hid the talent entrusted to him in the earth and returned it to his master, was condemned. He did exactly what the rule of honesty demanded and no more. He acted on the principle of trying to find out the rules instead of trying to see what was the most that could be done. It is a similar tendency which makes people want to reduce our Lord's teaching to rules. It is impossible to do so, as He never gives us water-tight regulations but striking epigrams, broadest principles, particular judgments on particular cases, or sometimes even questions, e.g. "What think ye?"—"Which now of these three, thinkest thou was neighbour unto him that fell among thieves?" I believe that He did so deliberately in order to make us think for ourselves, to "understand what the will of the Lord is". He does not want us to have more rules, but discern more clearly. The Christian in fact is to "redeem the time because the days are evil" (Eph. v. 16), or, as the Revised Version margin puts it "buy up the opportunity" and take every chance of doing good. There is a tremendous call for people who will not wait to be told what to do, but will see the real needs, take the initiative and accept responsibility for doing them. There are many jobs which are the duty of everyone in general and no one in particular, and so will never be done until some Christian is led to accept responsibility for them. The basis of English democracy is not primarily in abstract ideas, such as equality, but in the Christian experience, brought chiefly through

nonconformity, and most of all through Methodism, which gave men a sense of responsibility before God for their neighbour, so that they became willing to give time, energy and thought to running the affairs of chapel, village, Trade Union, Co-operative Society, town or nation. They did not wait for the vote or for government officials to encourage their co-operation, but set out to see what could be done under the existing order of things, or even in defiance of it.

Good intentions are no more adequate than rules. Some people have the idea that a sentiment of goodwill all round will be enough to overcome the world's problems. But this is not the view of the New Testament, which commands us "Look carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise . . . wherefore be ye not foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is" (v. 15, 17). Our Lord was no less emphatic; we are to be "wise as serpents", and from the parable of the unjust steward He drew the conclusion. "For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." Love is not satisfied with vague good wishes; it wants action adequate to its need. Therefore there must be discernment and thought. Such problems as the restoration of Germany to its rightful place in the life of Europe, the conquest of unemployment after the war, the provision of an adequate education for every child in our country, need not only good will, but careful and systematic thought. Benevolent sentiments cost nothing, but real thought is an effort; therefore it is the test of the reality of our love.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF MASTERS AND SLAVES ¹ [v. 5-9]

We cannot consider all the particular relationships which St. Paul mentions though we should notice that there are two fundamental principles underlying all he has to say on the subject. First, mutual subordination in the Body

¹ This section is based on Chapter IV of *The Two Moralities*, by A. D. Lindsay.

"Submit yourselves one to another in the fear of the Lord", and secondly, recognition of the rights of those whom His world regarded as being without rights—wives, children, slaves, e.g. in the words "Provoke not your children to wrath" (vi. 11) we have "a recognition of the rights of the child almost unique in the ancient world" (C. H. Dodd).

In considering slavery itself we must remember its nature in St. Paul's day. First, it was the basis of Society, especially on the economic and industrial side. If all the slaves in the Roman Empire had suddenly disappeared, total collapse would certainly have followed. Secondly, it was an appalling evil. Mommsen the great Roman historian wrote: "Compared with the sufferings of the Roman slaves, the sum of all negro suffering is but a drop." In view of these facts it is interesting to see both what St. Paul leaves unsaid and what he says.

St. Paul says nothing against the system; he does not even suggest that Christians should cease owning slaves. Part of the reason is, no doubt, that Paul had no democratic responsibility to concern himself with the affairs of the government nor any means of influencing its policy. We have that responsibility, and we can to some extent change our social institutions by legislation. Therefore it is our duty to be concerned about the State and its laws. But Paul was not the man to refrain from challenging an abuse just because it was difficult to get at it. Therefore, we may assume that to remedy abuses by legislation would not have been St. Paul's primary concern, even if he had had more opportunity to influence the imperial government of Rome; for the power of the law is in any case very limited. If the Emperor had signed a law abolishing slavery, either the law would have been evaded or a confusion worse than the evil of slavery would have followed; for public opinion was not ready for such a revolution. Therefore while we have a duty to concern ourselves with public affairs, it is not our first con-

cern, nor is our duty done once we get even the best laws passed.

What St. Paul says positively seems even more amazing at first sight. "Slaves be obedient to them that according to the flesh are your masters . . . with goodwill doing your slavery unto the Lord". A careless reader might assume that St. Paul is writing in the spirit of the rhyme—

Work and pray,
Live on hay,
There is pie
In the sky
When you die.

But his real point is that Christians both as masters and slaves are to rise above the assumptions of slavery in their own behaviour, and that the Church must be a society in which life is being lived in this new spirit. The basic assumption of slavery is the denial, backed by force, of the rights and personality of the slave. The slave obeyed because he must, and the master treated the slave as a piece of animated machinery to be made to yield as large a return as possible. But both slaves and masters are to ignore these assumptions in their attitude to each other. The slaves are to obey the master with the same devotion that they serve their Saviour, "Slaves be obedient unto . . . your masters . . . as unto Christ" (vi. 5); and masters are to abandon the attitude of force remembering that their slaves were their equals before God, "Ye masters . . . forbear threatening knowing that both their master and yours is in heaven, and there is no respect of persons with Him" (vi. 9). Where such an attitude prevails, the whole institution of slavery is already undermined. We may notice in passing how different St. Paul's attitude is from that of those in our time who are enthusiastic supporters of reforms designed to enforce a more just and neighbourly way of life on a large scale, but fail to show that spirit themselves in the smaller area of life

which actually is already under their control. The message of St. Paul's line of approach to this question of slavery is, "show in your private relationships, the spirit you want to see embodied in public institutions."

THE DIVINE ARMOUR [v. 10-23]

It has often been suggested that Paul took his picture of "the whole armour of God" from the equipment of a Roman soldier who stood on guard over him. It is far more likely that he took it from the Old Testament picture of God as a warrior clothed in armour (see Isaiah xi. 5; lix. 16-17; Wisdom of Solomon v. 17-20). It is the "armour of God" because God wore it first, and God gives it to us now. In this epistle Paul had been on a mountain-top surveying the Christian life in all its majesty. But before he closes he wants to tell his readers that the summing up of all things in Christ is not going to be achieved by peaceful and inevitable development, that the Christian life costs. It cost God and it costs us. There was a struggle and a victory in which God needed His armour, and we need the same armour. For Redemption was a battle for God, as we see if we contrast the Bible pictures of Creation and Redemption. "God said let there be light, and there was light." He spake the word and it was done, but Redemption was very different. "And he kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will but thine be done . . . And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly. And his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground." It cost God all that and more to redeem mankind.

St. Paul, therefore, says to those who would be Christ's followers that they must expect conflict and struggle. "Put on the whole armour of God, for you will need it." Do not be led astray by the glamour which the metaphor sometimes has. It will be a long and exhausting struggle; we may even

at times desire to throw it all up and yet not be able to do so, as George Tyrrell once wrote in the midst of his conflict for spiritual freedom: "How glad one would be to get out of it all, but there is that strange man on His Cross who drives me back again and again." But how does all this square with the peace and joy the Christian is promised? Perhaps the answer is to be found in a story once told by Dick Sheppard of a man in the trenches in France in the last war who was continually receiving nagging letters from home. At last he could bear it no more, and, addressing a post card to his wife, he put on it this message: "For God's sake let me enjoy this war in peace." The Christian must make these words his prayer, for he cannot have Christ's peace unless he will have Christ's war. The two were joined in our Lord's own experience. "The hour cometh, yea is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone." There was His war. "And yet I am not alone because the Father is with me." And there was His peace.

Hast thou no scar?

No hidden scar on foot, or side, or hand?

I hear thee sung as mighty in the land,

I hear them hail thy bright ascendant star,

Hast thou no scar?

Hast thou no wound?

Yet I was wounded by the archers, spent,

Leaned me against a tree to die; and rent

By ravening beasts that compassed Me, I swooned:

Hast thou no wound?

No wound? No scar?

Yet as the Master shall the servant be,

And pierced are the feet that follow Me;

But thine are whole: can He have followed far

Who has nor wound nor scar? ¹

¹ Amy Wilson Carmichael.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

CHAPTER I

1. Are there any valid objections to foreign missions to-day which could not have been made in the time of St. Paul?
2. Looking back over the expansion of the Church, St. Paul saw what God had done and what He meant by it (page 3). Can we? What has God done through the Church during the last hundred years? What does He mean by it?

CHAPTER II

1. What do you understand by the phrase "to sum up" (Eph. i. 10)? How can God sum up "evil and wars, sin and suffering and slums, lust and lying and cruelty and cancer" (page 7)? And what will it mean?
2. Collect all the references you can in the New Testament to stewards and stewardship, and discuss what they tell us about our responsibility to God for the working out of His purpose.

CHAPTER III

1. Which is the best metaphor for (a) the Church as it is, (b) the Church as it ought to be? Followers? Army? Body? or what?
2. What does it mean to be saved? And how do you get saved?
3. "Yes, but I have not got the Faith." What is your answer to this person's difficulty?

CHAPTER IV

1. Does the New Testament support the view that man's fundamental needs are to be at home with God, to be at peace with his fellow-man, and to have a satisfying work to do for God? Does your experience support the New Testament? How can people be made aware of these needs?
2. What do we mean when we say "Christ bore our sins

(page 40)? How can Christ's death
ence to them and their relation to

3. Suggest some modern "middles"
our Lord broken them down?

4. "The emotional hold of our
of the things we have in common"
for the disunity of the Church? If s

CHAPTER

1. What is the difference between
of the Spirit" (page 50)? Does your
unity of the Church, on your relation

2. How can work in an office or
God (page 52)? Could everybody's
the existing order of society? If no

3. Does the Bible support the view
belong to the visible organized Church

CHAPTER

1. What is the distinctive quality

2. Have St. Paul's remarks about
problems of society to-day? Have
unregenerate society other than to

3. Does it make life easier or harder

Hidden Mystery

t's death centuries ago make any difference to God to-day?

n "middle walls of partition". How has it been torn down?

l of our differences is greater than that of our common" (page 42). Is this the reason for the Church? If so, what is to be done about it?

CHAPTER V

e between unity of spirit and "the unity of the Church". Does your answer throw any light on the nature of our relationships with other Christians?

office or factory become a ministry of reconciliation? Can everybody's work be so transformed under the influence of the Spirit? If not what changes are needed?

port the view that a true Christian must belong to a unified Church?

CHAPTER VI

ve quality of Christian love?

marks about slavery any bearing on our Christian duty? Have Christians any duty to the world other than to lead its members to Christ? Is it easier or harder to be a Christian?

THE HIDDEN MYSTERY

These studies reproduce a series of Bible readings given at a Summer School, where they attracted great attention and interest. In book form they have kept a great deal of the spontaneity of the spoken word, as well as giving a clear and compelling analysis of the Christian way of life.

Mr. Scott does not claim to have written a complete commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians, but has aimed at presenting this letter and its message as a whole, in order to gain a fuller understanding of God's purpose for the world—"the mystery which from all ages had been hid in God who created all things", and has now been made known in Christ.

Within the framework of the epistle, the author deals with problems which are no less urgent in our own day than they were in St. Paul's, and his book will be valued not only for its devotional quality but for its challenging ideas, discussion of which is stimulated by the questions for study circles given at the end of the volume.



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